DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 031 631 AC 004 692

By-Wentworth, Robert B.
How to Study a Correspondence Course.
Massachusetts State Board of Education, Boston.
Pub Date Feb 67
Note-22p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.20
Descriptors-Adult Learning, *Correspondence Study, Memorizing, Reading Skills, Student Evaluation, *Study Guides, *Study Habits, Testing

The guide to correspondence study presents suggestions for good study habits and techniques, and for examinations. Discussion of how adults learn is followed by information on necessary equipment, memorization, reading improvement, use of the study guide, submitting lessons, and grading of lessons. The section on final examinations includes discussion of preparation and writing of essays and objective type examinations. (pt)

EDO 316631 304692
Jul 69

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Education
Bureau of Adult Education
and Extended Services

HOW TO STUDY A CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

AC 004 692

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February 1967

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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HOW TO STUDY A CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

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HOW TO STUDY A CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

A. Studying and Preparing Lesson Reports

Getting Ready to Study

Do you know how most adults learn? Do you know your own learning strengths and weaknesses? This manual shows you how to learn by making the most of your strengths and overcoming your weaknesses.

Let's begin by looking at some facts about how adults learn. Age doesn't have very much to do with learning. You have forgotten many details, but you have generalized much of the information that you have acquired over the years. Your intelligence is as good as ever, perhaps even a bit better. You can still memorize effectively.

But you have at least two important advantages over the young person in school. In the first place, you have learned a great deal by living. Much of the information in a government course can be picked up through years of newspaper reading. What you know about life is related to what you will study. You have a viewpoint from high up on the mountain rather than from the valley.

Secondly, you have stronger reasons for learning as compared with young people. You know a great deal about your needs; you realize why certain information and skills are important to you. You can see how what you are learning fits in with what you already know. If you are a bookkeeper, for example, you have a personal interest in learning something about accounting.

But why do many adults fail to continue their education successfully? There are several reasons:

--They don't plan for success. This involves self-discipline, using strengths and overcoming weaknesses.

--They don't have realistic goals. There should be a distant goal and lesser goals along the way.

--They lack a positive attitude. Unless you think you can do it, you can't do it. You need not feel embarrassed about lack of knowledge. In a correspondence course you are in a "class by yourself" and no other student sees your shortcomings.

--Some people don't learn because they resist all change. Learning is growth. An idea which was good enough for a youngster or good enough years ago, isn't geared to adult thinking in our times.

-- Some people don't stick with it long enough. There are many instances of students who enroll in a course and never submit a single lesson; others complete only a few lessons and give up easily.

Now that you realize how adults learn and why adults fail, can you list your own strengths and weaknesses? In the following pages we will show how to utilize strengths and overcome weaknesses.

A Study Plan

Assigned hours of study should be a part of your total plan for the week. Perhaps certain hours must be devoted to paid employment and home responsibilities. Your studies should have next attention.It may be well to make a chart, scheduling each hour of each day from "getting up" to bedtime. First, record what is actually done in a typical week, then adjust your schedule to allow for adequate "prime time" for study. Such a plan is a guide, not a strait-jacket. You may vary your plan, but make sure you do not cheat yourself!

Some of us may study better in the early morning hours while others may study more effectively in the late evening hours. Discover your own preferences, but be sure to set aside blocks of time for each study session. Allow at least one hour at a time for honest, concentrated mental exercise. Gradually work toward study periods of two or three hours each.

In setting aside a certain block of time, plan to complete a given amount of work in that time. This procedure encourages you to accomplish more than you would otherwise.

Your study plan should help you to establish good study habits. This plan is particularly important if you must "unlearn" bad habits such as "putting things off" or "waiting for the spirit to move". Holding to a regular time is a good habit to form because it means that you get more out of your study time. You approach the time with a mental attitude favorable to study because you have convinced yourself this is the proper time to study just as another time is the proper time to eat.

What Equipment Will You Need

Travel lightly but choose carefully those provisions which will accompany you. Before mentioning the physical requirements, let's think about the necessary mental equipment.

--Are you curious enough to discover new facts and new menaings?
--Are you open-minded about new roads, new ways, new alternatives?

--Are you courageous enough to press on toward a distant goal, taking each hurdle in stride?

--Are you willing to pay the price of success, giving up some of your accustomed pleasures?

--Do you pause, think, and question before you act?

--Are you enthusiastic or can you develop enthusiasm?

--Can you concentrate yet still enjoy the scenery, knowing literature and enjoying it too?

Learning and studying require certain physical tools which help us to learn more quickly and more effectively. First look at the tools which were provided when you received your course. Usually there is a textbook, also perhaps one or more supplementary texts, a laboratory manual or workbook. A distinctive characteristic of the correspondence course is its study guide. Most study guides are divided into three parts: (a) the study requirements for each lesson, (b) the commentary, instructor's message, discussion material or teaching notes (roughly equivalent to what an instructor might say in class), and the lesson report (homework) to be submitted for correction and comments by the instructor. In addition, you are provided a cover sheet (so that a window envelope may be used to return your lessons) for each lesson and a supply of lesson paper. Special paper and miscellaneous supplies are included, if needed.

You should provide one or more pens or a typewriter. A dictionary is highly desirable. You also need a simple notebook for notetaking although you may also mark up your textbook if it is your personal property. Clothing isn't important except that it should be comfortable. Some people prefer to study in something gay and very informal. Assemble your equipment at your place of study and be prepared for action.

Where Should You Study?

Much has been written about the importance of a quiet place to study, free from distractions, with plenty of fresh air, good lighting, and a business-like table and chair. A machinist expects a working machine in a proper setting; an organist expects an adequate instrument in good tune. By the same reasoning a student should have the proper physical facilities.

We have been talking about the ideal. Approach it as closely as you can. Just as having a definite time for study is important so is having a definite place. A proper place helps you to be more productive; a customary place, even if it is less than ideal, also helps you to increase your effectiveness.

If you attempt to study while watching a television program you are not giving your studies your best effort. You are actually alternating your attention between the course and the television. You are losing some of the benefits of concentration (which will be discussed later.)

There is some evidence, however, that a mild distraction may actually be helpful. You may work better in the presence of a ticking clock. You may be stimulated by soft radio music--music to work by.

Perhaps,if you have a family, you need to hang a "Do Nct Disturb" sign on your door. This means no telephone calls,no quick questions, no little wanderers looking for a drink of water. You are very much alive for your studies, but otherwise "dead to the world."

Yes, but your case is different? Perhaps. But recognize that even poor conditions can be overcome if you want to badly enough! Lessons have been written on steel cots in Army barracks, in squadron recreation rooms, in wind-swept tents, in the depth of thejungle, in trenches behind the front lines.

Concentrating on Your Studies

A plan for study, the equipment for study, and a proper place for study are intended to help you to concentrate on your studies. Do you have good powers of concentration?

We all concentrate effectively on something. Perhaps it is a game or a trip. Can you concentrate effectively on the British game of Cricket? Probably not, because you're not interested. But you won't be interested until you know something about the game. You might like cricket very much. This suggests that you should not limit yourself to studying just what interests you. Study to develop interests.

Concentration can be developed. A state of physical wellbeing is highly desirable as a starting point. You should have adequate sleep, regular eating habits, enough exercise to stimulate the mind, and self-discipline of spirit, mind and body.

Actually, concentration means devoting onself to just one thing at a time and doing that whole-heartedly. If other ideas come to mind. put them out of your head or make a brief note reminding you to take care of them later. Give your attention to the business at hand. Tackle the assignment; dcn't just sit in its presence.

Overcome external distractions by eliminating them if you can. If not, disregard the distractions.

Internal distractions may be more of a problem. Worry and fear are particularly troublesome. A little worry is a good thing if it stimualtes you to action. But too much worry makes it impossible for you to act effectively. Sometimes stating your fear in words, giving the reasons for it and the methods you will use to overcome worry are enough to dispel worry for a time at least. Talking it out with someone who understands, even if that person can take no remedial action, often helps a great deal. Sometimes, if you are scared, it is well to remember that the "other guy" feels scared too. Are you afraid of failure? You can learn from your mistakes and try again.

But don't try to concentrate if you are upset emotionally. Your efforts will not be rewarded. You must first "clear your mind" or remove the causes of your emotional difficulty.

A warm up period helps concentration. This means beginning with a relatively simple mental task before attempting a more difficult mental assault. If you stop too soon you lose the benefit of the warm up. As in running a race, there is a "second wind" which comes when you seem to be nearing the point of exhaustion.

Your periods of complete concentration may be relatively short at first. Perhaps you need to stretch and pace around a bit after 15 minutes. Later you will be able to immerse yourself and lose all thought of time for several hours at a stretch. Reward yourself for good behavior. If the task seems particularly difficult, promise yourself some little pleasure when you have completed it or when you have concentrated for the longest possible period. Your mind will work better that way.

Reading aloud or even restating aloud in your own words what you have read are aids to concentration. Underlining passages in the text also helps. Note-taking is a useful device, especially if you take well-organized notes which may be used for review.

You wouldn't make the basketball team by playing in a half-hearted way. You won't score in your studies unless you concerntrate.

Concentration provides its own rewards. If it does nothing else, at least it helps you to finsih an unpleasant task sooner than you would otherwise. But by concentrating you often develop a real interest in a subject and perhaps even an enthusiam for it. Furthermore, if you act with enthusiasm you tend to become enthusiastic whether you want to or not. Solving a problem can be as exciting as winning a game . Give it your best!

Should you daydream? Many people would say that daydreaming indicates a lack of concentration, but this isn't necessarily so. Daydreaming can be used constructively, but you must act rather than react. Once you have assembled the raw materials needed for the solution of yourproblem,you might well let your mind wander over various possible combinations. You might ask yourself questions such as "What if...?""What else?" "In what new ways...?" "How else can the problem be solved?" Perhaps a perfectly wild daydream can be tamed down slightly into a practical, usable idea.

Sometimes a great light shines suddenly when all seemed darkest. But such moments of inspiration come to those who work for them. Work to the point of exhaustion, then relax, daydream,forget the problem, do something else. Take a walk, have a bath, have fun--your answer will come to you in a flash when you least expect it.

If you're in love, it may seem difficult to concentrate, but your love should give you added strength and courage to do your best. Work is love made visible. Your achievement is a gift to your loved one. Make it the best possible gift that you can.

How Important Is It To Memorize?

Learning by doing is now considered more important than memorizing facts. An ability to use knowledge constructively is more important than knowledge itself.

Using information helps you to keep it in your mind; therefore, less straight memory work is needed.

The tendency today is not to memorize information which can be easily found in reference works. But some basic facts must be at our fingertips--the alphabet, the multiplication tables, the more common units of measure, a very few dates (1492,1776, etc.) which are common knowledge among educated people.

You will want to learn some famous sayings and gems of poetry. These great thoughts of famous men will serve you in a sudden crisis as guides to action.

A good memory is helpful when you must "think on your feet" and in public contacts where it is important to remember names and faces.

Finally, a good memory helps you to get more pleasure from art, music, languages, literature. When listening to music you will recall something about the composer and the meaning of the work to which you are listening.

In short, memorizing is important if we memorize for a purpose. Sometimes we need to memorize only to the point of recognition (to be able to tell the difference between a right answer and a wrong one), sometimes to recall (to be able to provide the right answer at a later time) and sometimes for permanent retention.

What You Need To Memorize

Your study guide will incicate what should be memorized. In general, the following types of material are typical of what should be memorized:

--Definitions of techinical terms. The ability to restate a textbook definition accurately is important. Your definition need not be in exactly the same word if the meaning is the same.

--Certain formulas in common use.

--The step-by-step procedures in some basic methods.

--Key dates in history. In literature, approximate dates or time periods are usually sufficient.

--Fundamental rules of grammar in our own language and in any foreign language studied (but the ability to use language correctly is more important than the rules).

--Correct spelling of common words and, to some extent, rules for spelling if the rules help you to spell correctly.

--Vocabulary in a foreign language(but you don't need to learn long lists of French words any more than you learn long lists of English words. Use the words and translate them frequently).

How To Memorize

Understand the meaning first. This is true whether you are learning a formula or a poem.

In learning connected material, try to learn relatively large segments at one time. Learn at least a stanza of a poem at one time. Otherwise, you must learn many separate connections in addition to the material itself.

Observe relationships within the material itself. What does A have to do with B? A date may be easier to remember if you think of it as being just 200 years after Columbus discovered America. To memorize 8463, think of it this way: start with 8, halve it; start with two less, halve it.

Use memory devices if they work well for you. They establish artificial connections. A famous one is "Alice" -- i before e except after c. But some memory devices are so complicated they just make extra work!

Don't try to memorize too much at one time. Spaced learning with frequent repetition is more effective than one or a few long periods of memorization.

A combination of methods is usually more effective than any one method alone. Reread, read aloud, write down, visualize by closing your eyes.

Review the same material in a few days so that you will be able to remember it longer than the minimum time required.

Use the learned information as frequently as possible.

Learning To Read Better And Faster

Faster reading usually means better understanding of the material read. Speeding up forces you to be more alert for meaning.

What is your purpose in reading a particular passage? Your study guide may indicate what you should get from the reading. If not, you must decide on the purpose yourself.

--Are you looking for a general idea of the content? Skim the material.

--Are you looking for a specific answer to a question in material which has been previously studied? Skim the material.

--Are you reading fiction for pure enjoyment (a good idea, even if you are to study it carefully a little later)? Skim the material or ramble through it, whichever gives you the most pleasure.

--Are you studying for a full understanding of the basic material? Skim first, then study carefully, noting the organization of material, topic and summary sentences (see below), key words, technical words.

--How difficult is the material to be read? If it is "light" reading, you may skim through it. If it is technical reading, every word is important. You will need to go slowly and understand what you read as you go along.

Your study guide may make a distinction between read and study. Read may mean read for enjoyment or read to get the main points. Study means first to read, then to go over carefully and finally to review. In other words, go once over lightly to get the lay of the land, then go back to really dig in.

Read groups of words instead of individual words. A simple way to force yourself to do this is to move a sheet of plain paper down the page, covering each line as you read. Gradually increase the speed with which you move the paper to increase your reading speed.

Underline topic sentences and summary sentences. The first sentence in a paragraph is often a topic sentence. It tells what the rest of the paragraph is about. The last sentence may be a summary sentence. It gives the highlights of what has already been said.

Finish a paragraph, page or section (depending on the difficulty of the material); then check yourself on understanding. Can you tell what it is about? If you're not sure, go over the material again.

Don't let new words stop you. Continue to read, trying to get the idea from the rest of the sentence or paragraph. Mark the new word or write it on a separate list . When you reach a good stopping place, look up the meaning of the new word.

Don't stop in the middle of a paragraph. If the meaning doesn't become clear by the time you finish the paragraph, go back and reread the whole paragraph. The reason is this: it is more efficient to deal with complete thoughts than meaningless fragments which must be fitted together.

As you read , do all of these things:

--Mark the text: topic and summary sentences, key words, technical words.

--Take notes.

--Restate what you have read in your own words, preferably out loud.

--Answer review questions at the end of the chapter. If there are none, make up ones of your own and answer them.

--Figure out the meaning of charts, graphs or other visual aids as you go along.

--Notice footnotes. A footnote will support what has already been said or will give an important exception.

--Ask yourself how the material you have already read is related to what you have previously studied. Why is it important?

--Review previous lessons and review what you are now learning before completing your present lesson.

--If you have the opportunity, explain what you are studying to someone else. In this way you will discover how well you know it.

As you read faster, you will read better. As you read more , you will read faster and better. If this does not prove true, you may have eye trouble or you may not be a silent reader. If your lips move or if you can feel vibrations in your throat, you have a handicap which must be overcome.

How To Use The Study Guide For Your Course

Unless different directions are indicated in your study guide, the following procedures will help you to use the study guide effectively:

--Browse through the study guide to see how it is orgainzed and the kind of help that it contains. Note the required materials listed on the cover of the study guide. Did you recieve these materials?

--Browse through the textbook, noting particularly the table of contents.

--Read the introduction to the study guide and the introduction to the textbook before giving your attention to the first assignment. The introduction to the text will tell you what the author is trying to do in the text. The introduction to the study guide will tell you what your instructor expects of you.

--Usually it is profitable to read the study guide commentary for each lesson (the notes or gist of what an instructor might say in class) as your first step in studying the lesson and again as a last step before working on the questions to be written out. In this way you receive both a preview and a review of the lesson.

--A quick reading of the lesson report requirements is helpful before you begin to study intensively. This is to give you a general idea of what is expected. But do not search only for the answers to the questions; this is inadequate preparation and will hurt you in preparation for the final examination.

--Write your lesson report, using the text as a reference if needed, but being careful not to lean on it. As much as you can, answer without using the text since this is the way you must (in most courses) write the final examination.

--Do not copy answers from the book. In defining terms, restate the definition in your own words to show that you understand it. If a question is answered directly in the text (many are not), restate the answer in your own words.

--A question may call for you to compare material found in different parts of the text or in different texts. You are expected to find relationships, to show the significance of what has been read.

--You will be asked to form your own judgments in many courses. You should never accept a viewpoint uncritically even if it is the viewpoint of an expert. Do experts always agree? What does your own experience contribute to the answer? What have you learned elsewhere on the same topic? If what is said is true, why is it ture? But when you say "I think" be able to back up what you say with real evidence and logical reasoning.

--Some questions may draw on information outside the immediate scope of the course. You may be asked to compare an historical event with a current event. This requires thinking, but this is what makes your course very valuable to you.

-- You will find some excellent suggestions on organizing your essay answers and coping with objective-type tests in the section of this manual entitled "Writing a Worth-while Final Examination." What applies in the examination also applies in lesson preparation, so look ahead to the section on writing the examination.

Procedures On Submitting Your Lessons

Before you submit the first lesson, make out the form entitled "Personal Information for your Instructor." It will help your instructor to help you.

Use the official lesson paper (both sides) and any special paper that may be provided. A cover sheet should be used for each lesson. This cover sheet has a box in the upper left hand corner for your name and address. If this box is filled out completely (use your Zip code) your lesson can, in most cases, be returned to you in a window envelope.

Be sure to show your name and address, the name of the course, the lesson number and the date wherever this information is called for. The exact name of the course isimportant as there may be other courses in the same subject. Attention to these details will help speed the return of your lessons.

Problems do not need to be copied from the text or study guide unless this is necessary for their solution. In solving problems, be sure to show all the steps taken in arriving at the answer. Use diagrams to illustrate your points, if appropriate.

Use ink or typewriter and both sides of the paper unless otherwise directed. You should leave a left-hand margin of at least one and a half inches. Allow space between answers for your instructor's comments.

Send in one lesson at a time, or at the most, two lessons. It is usually wise to wait for the return of your corrected lessons before submitting another lesson so that mistakes will not be repeated. But while you are waiting you can be working on the next lesson.

Ask questions (preferably on the cover sheet) when you send in a lesson. You should ask a question whenever material is not clear to you, if you want help in finding further information, if you want to clarify a view in your own mind, or merely to show that you are thinking critically. But when you ask a question, do it intelligently. Don't say, "I don't understand closing entries" because the instructor can't say much more than "see chapter 17". Instead, try this: "Why is the X account debited? From what the book says on page 67 I should think it would be credited". Note that to ask a question intelligently you should not only be specific but you should also suggest a possible answer.

Do not send your lesson reports to a high school equivalency supervisor or to your instructor. This causes delays. Send your reports to Correspondence Instruction, Bureau of Adult Education and Extended Services, 182 Tremont Street Boston, Massachusetts 02111.

DON'T BE TOO SLOW- You must complete all the requirements (including the final examination)of a correspondence course within two years of registration in order to receive credit for the course. In high school credit and college credit courses, the examination counts 50% of the final grade.

Non-credit courses do not usually have final examinations, but the same two year rule applies.

Requests for an extension of time in individual cases will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

DON'T BE TOO FAST- About one lesson a week is a good average rate for the busy person. Usually lessons require from 8 to 12 hours of attentive study by the average student.

Ideally, you should have the benefit of the instuuctor's comments on each lesson before submitting the next lesson. In any case don't submit more than two lessons at a time. When lessons are submitted too frequently we either return them or hold them a while so that other students will not be kept waiting.

SET YOUR OWN PACE -within reasonable limits. That is one of the advantages of a correspondence course! Whatever you do-give it your best.

When You Receive Your Corrected Paper From The Instructor

When your lesson is received at the Office of Correspondence Instruction it is recorded under the name of your insturctor and sent to him promptly. He is allowed one week to correct your paper and add his teaching comments before mailing it back to the office. When the corrected paper is received, it is checked off on the list and the grade is recorded on your student file card. It is then mailed to you within 24 hours.

Naturally, when your paper comes back, you look to see how well you did. Even if the results are up to what you expected, don't be content. Read all the corrections and instructor's comments carefully. Can you avoid making the same mistakes again?

Perhaps your instructor has suggested you look up certain answers or restudy certain topics. Do so beforegoing on to new material. Perhaps you need to rethink the next lesson on which you were working as a result of these corrections and comments.

If your paper is marked incomplete or if you received a failing grade (see suggestions below), you should resubmit your entire paper after further study and preparation. Do not resubmit a paper on which you have received a passing grade.

Sometimes an instructor will suggest that you do additional remedial work which is not to be submitted for correction. Grading is not necessary. The instructor can tell from the following lessons whether you have made the necessary corrections or not.

One of the real advantages of the correspondence course is the personal attention you receive from the instructor. You may make mistakes or ask questions without the embarrasment of wondering what your classmeates might think of you. You receive thoughtful answers which are prepared for you alone. Cherish these comments.

Thought questions may be raised by your instructor in response to what you have written. Or he may give you some of his personal views. You are now experiencing correspondence instruciton at its best! Comment on his comments if you like. You'll have adialogue going which will make your work very interesting and profitable.

If You Receive A Low Grade Or A Failing Grade On A Lesson

Be frank with yourself. Did you really spend enough time on the lesson? Did you make careless errors you should have noticed if you proofread your completed work before sending it in? Did you really understand the problem before you started to find a solution?

Don't take grades too seriously. It's what you know and can do, both now and in the future, that really counts. The grades are merely symbols.

One lesson is not the whole course. Perhaps a single small misunderstanding separates failure from success. Clear that up and you are ready to move ahead. If you get the fundamentals now, the rest will be much easier.

A failure on a lesson does not mean that you are a failure. Rise above it. Think of the times you have succeeded. Everyone has his weak points. Perhaps you are very good at something which your instructor cannot do at all!

If the situation is really very bad, are you in the right course? Perhaps you need the experience of a more basic course before continuing with the one you now have. Walk before you try to run! You may make arrangements to interrupt your present course, enroll in a more basic course, then return to your present course when the other one is completed successfully.Or you may want to transfer to another course. In any case, you will be respected for facing the situation realisitically.

B. Writing A Worthwhile Final Examination

Studying For The Examination

Your preparation for the supervised final examination begins the day you start the first lesson. If you learn as you go along, much that you will need to know on the final examination will be familiar to you by then. Unless you are told otherwise, you may assume that the examination will be much like the individual lesson assignments except that you will not have the opportunity of using references.

In the final examination the correspondence student proves himself in the same way that the class student does. Various research studies have shown that correspondence students do as well as or better than class students. If you have done your part, you should enter the examination room with the feeling that you are well prepared.

1. Plan to take the examination relatively soon after you complete the last assignment. You should review all your lesson reports, noting especially the instructor's comments. Are you thoroughly familiar with the corrections that the instructor has noted? Have you followed suggestions for improvement?

2. Review everything in the study guide, but do not attempt to re-read all the text material assigned. You should now attempt to see the whole picture rather than details piece by piece. How does it all fit together? Reread the preface to the text to see what the author attempted to do. How has he accomplished his objectives? Look again at the Table of Contents to see the chief parts of the whole picture and how they fit together.

3. Look for relationships between variuos parts of the course. Where can you point out similarities? Where are there differences? What significant comparisons might you make? In short, think about what you have learned.

4. Don't cram. Information learned by cramming is not long remembered. It will not be useful to you later on. Space your review and get plenty of rest.

5. Go to the examination room well prepared. Usually your examination will be written in ink. Do you have at least two ball point pens with you? Are there other materials you are expected to bring with you?

Writing The Essay Examination

Remain calm. You have plenty of time. An examination which would be scheduled for two hours if used in a class course is scheduled for three hours in a correspondence course.

Put your name on page one. You can't go wrong on this.

Read the entire examination through slowly. What parts will you find particularly difficult? What parts are especially easy for you? Are you sure? Have you overlooked any possible surprises? Underline the key words.

Notice the directions. Are you expected to do all of the questions or are there choices? Are some questions more important than others, i.e. will one question count 25% while another counts only 10% of the entire examination?

Think about each question and make rough notes beside each examination question. Do this for all of the questions before writing answers to any questions. Your notes, in no particular order, are hardly more than a grocery list. Later, as you come to answer each question, you may number the items on your grocery list to indicate the order in which you will develop your points. Do not make a formal outline.

Now make out a time schedule, much like a railroad time schedule. You are due at question 2 at 9:30, for example. This is a warning not to be carried away with what you are writing on question 1. You may run late at a given "station" if you need to, but you must make up the time somewhere else. Allow time for a thoughtful reading of all that you have written when you have completed the entire examination.

Before writing, make sure you understand exactly what each question calls for. Since you have thought about all the questions, you should be able to avoid the mistake of giving information in question one which should occur in question 5.

Now start with the first question and do exactly what the question says to do.

> Define means to give the meaning of a term. Every definition must place the word being defined in a class and then show how it is different from the other words in the same class. Example: Psychology is a social science (the class) which deals with individual human behavior (how psychology differs from other social sciences). Do not use the expression "is when" or "is where!" You would not say that a Ford is when you go for a ride!

Explain means to make plain. This involves some detail. Also, whatever you say should be easily understood. Telling why may be important.

Discuss means to present various points of view, advantages and disadvantages, etc. It may involve pointing out how a situation developed, uses of a product, dangers to be avoided, or other information. It calls for more detail than a mere explanation. Usually discussion calls for some interpretation of facts or expression of opinion on the part of the student. A mere listing of facts, however important, is not a discussion.

Criticize means to sit in judgment on a situation or idea. You are expected to point out both unfavorable and favorable aspects. In criticizing you should indicate the standard against which you measure whatever is being criticized. What an author says (for example) may be measured against his own statement of what he proposed to do. Part of your criticism may be a comparison of an author's book with similar books by other authors in the same field. If your criticism is constructive it will suggest alternatives. How might the author improve his work?

Evaluate means to place a value on a product, situation or idea. How important is it? How useful is it?

Compare means to point out both similarities and differences.

Contrast means to point out differences only.

Summarize means to present the main points briefly with emphasis on what is most important.

Write with integrity and enthusiasm and, whenever possible, about something you know about from your own experience. A logical explanation of why you dislike a classic is worth more than pale and insincere praise of it. By the same reasoning, it is better to write a well-orgainzed, detailed description of your garage than to offer vague platitudes about the beauties of nature.

Write good English. Be simple and direct but use technical words whenever appropriate. Make your meaning clear. Be interested in what you have to say and say it interestingly, but without cute tricks. Communicate.

Organize your answer before you start to write. Use the rough notes or grocery list that you have already prepared as your starting point. A common mistake is to say nothing in the first snetnece or the first paragraph. Do not merely repeat the question in different words. Do not merely say that something is important; show how or why it is important. If you make general statements, illustrate with specific examples.

It is often a good idea to label your answers with appropriate headings and subheadings to show organization and to make your points more emphatic.

You may begin with a topic sentence which summarizes your answer or with one of the main points. But remember that quality is more important than quantity.

On the other hand, sometimes it is helpful to begin your answer with a question. The question may reveal your underatanding of a fairly lenghthy statement of the problem. You may then answer your own question in strong terms of your own choosing.

If you are discussing something controversial, mention the different points of view and the authorities who hold each view. How much of the controversy is theory and how much fact?

Show your reasoning power in your answer. You will need facts for raw materials, but construct a logical argument with whatever materials you have. Often if you have forgotten facts you can "reason out" what those facts must be or might possibly be.

If you don't understand the question, you will need to resort to imagination and reasoning. You might say, for example, if the question means such and such, it would seem to follow that .....On the other hand, if the question means this, then it would seem to follow that..... In any case, state your assumptions. Being able to use your imagination and reasoning power is more important than remembering facts that you can look up later.

If information essential to the solution of a problem seems to be missing from the statement of the problem, perhaps the omission is intentional. In real life data is not always found in the convenient packages in which it is introduced in a textbook. If the closing inventroy figure is missing, cannot you find it by adding beginning inventory and purchases and subtracting sales?

In doing mathematical problems always show how you arrived at your answers. Method is very important. Correct method and well-organized data are valuable even if you do not arrive at exactly the right answer.

Neatness counts. Your instructor has many papers to read. If your paper is neat and well-organized, he already feels kindly toward you when he picks up your paper.

Don't pretend to know more than you do. The frequent use of "etc". suggests that you have forgotten the other points. If you could have given more information if time permitted, you may generalize by a closing statement such as "Other writers who have taken similar views are (naming the writers)."

Perhaps your first reaction is that the examination is so difficult that you cannot possibly pass it. Be calm. A great deal can happen in the next two or three hours. Show enough determination to stay with the problem until time is up or until you have conquered the situation. You may still produce an A paper.

The suggestions already made on imagination and reasoning apply here. Don't give up because of "missing information" ; perhaps it is there in disguise.

Give yourself a brief rest period ; then look at the problem again with fresh eyes. Is it possible to break up a large problem into smaller ones which can be dealt with one by one? This is often the case. Once you have made a start, the whole solution may come to you in a flash.

A more common emergency is to run out of time before the examination is completed. This should not occur if you follow your own timetable, but if it does occur, in the few minutes remaining you should be able to outline your answers in some logical way.

Some Hints On Objective Type Examinations

Objective type examinations are useful in checking on the grasp of detail. They require you to distinguish between correct and incorrect information as well as between logical and illogical reasoning.

It is usually worthwhile to skim through the entire examination first. Do the easiest questions first or the ones which you are most sure of. Do not worry at length about a particular question as you may read into it a meaning which is obscure and not relevant. Come back to the hardest questions at the end.

Multiple choice questions usually have four possible answers from which to choose. These answers may be paired -- two are similar but both incorrect; another two are similar but one of them is a more accurate answer than the other.

Matching questions usually have spare parts which will be left over. You should be prepared for obvious matching such as matching authors with their works and characters with the novels in which they appear.

True-false statements have pitfalls of their own. If a statement is sometimes true and sometimes false, mark it false (unless there is a category "sometimes true"). If the statement is correct as to facts but an incorrect conclusion is drawn from the facts, mark the statement false.

Beware of statements which sound as if they were copied from the text. One word may have been changed, but this word may change the entire meaning.

A statement which claims to be always true or never true is probably false. It is more accurate to say "in general" such-and-such is true.

Some true-false statements are so easy that everyone will be expected to get the right answer . Others may be so difficult that no one, or almost no one, will have the correct answer. (It is assumed that everyone knows something about the subject but that no one knows all there is to know about it.)

Should you guess at answers? It depends on how the test is graded. In general, the best prepared students make the most intelligent guesses.

Sometimes a true-false examination calls for a brief comment on each question. In that case do not merely repeat the statement. If it is true, show why it is true or give an example. If it is false show why it is false and correct the statement to make it true.

The Last Thing To Do In Any Examination

Read over everything that you have written. Have you omitted anything? Have you made careless errors? Is your message entirely clear? Is it as accurate as you can make it? Have you had any good second thoughts?

Is your name on every page? Good. Assemble the pages in the correct order with the examination questions on the top. Pass in your work, leave promptly, and don't worry about what can't be changed now. Your certificate of completion should be along in two or three weeks.

References

There are many useful references, but these are the ones we consulted in detail.

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